

CES Information Inside!

JUNE 1987

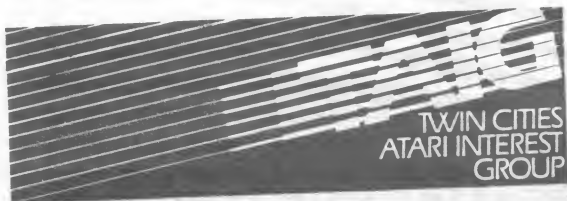
TWIN CITIES ATARI INTEREST GROUP

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The Taig BBS (612) 522-2687

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NOTES FROM THE MEMBERSHIP CHAIRMAN
by Nathan Block

Hello faithful members!! Standard news tonight is as follows:

MEMBERS DUE FOR JUNE

(Our own) TOM GREEN

Believe it or not that's it or we're prejudice against June because that's my sisters' birthday (reason enough...)

Moving right along.....

THESE ARE OVERDUE MEMBERS

If you don't pay by the end of this month, you will be scratched from the roster.

Thomas Flannery
Bruce Haug
Steve Hopper
John Hines
Marshall Keith
Paul Moe
Ralph Rye
Mark Simonson
Leroy Simonson
John Stanley
Craig Starr
Dennis Hensche
Peter Zenanko
Theresa Ziemiecki

My thanks to George Wilson and Chuck Stenshoel who have renewed!

Also, please welcome the following:

Vince Maiocco
Kurt Modeen
Hugh Morgan

Good to have you aboard!

See you all at the meeting!

Nathan Block

Presidents Notes for June, 1987
By Steven Ingalsbe

The Amateur Fair has come and gone for another year, and we didn't do too bad. We got the chance to talk to a lot of Atari people, and maybe even helped a few of them out by answering questions. I hope that you new people come and check out a monthly meeting. Better yet, get involved with the club, it is a real learning experience.

I don't have a whole lot to talk about this month, I used up all of my NEWS at the last meeting. For those of you who didn't make it, the first part of the meeting was real interesting. I think that everybody learned something. As for the second part of the meeting, well, it stunk. I am sorry that anybody had to sit through it (including me). The whole thing just lasted too long for me. I didn't get home until 11:00 pm. That can make for a very long meeting. This meeting will be quite a bit shorter because:

A) I don't want a repeat of last month

B) this is a short month for us.

Due to a scheduling problem, we will be meeting June 21st instead of June 28th. I hope this doesn't keep too many people away. Sense it is both Fathers day, and Summer, there will probably be a low turn out. Therefore, I am asking you to try and make it if you can. Ken has promised that there will be 8-bit demo's, and Nathan is still planning to have his BASIC special interest group (SIG). If you have any interest in BASIC programming, contact Nathan.

If you didn't make it too the Amateur Fair, you missed a fun time. Every year it is getting less Ham Radio oriented, and more computer oriented. I only saw 2 users groups who bought booths this year, but there were quite a few more computer dealers. Of the 2 groups that bought a booth, we were the only ones running demo's and showing software. The other booth (which was Apple), was there just to sign up people. I don't know how they did, but we got 10 new members, and we gave away all of the posters that we had there. I think that most of the interest around the booth centered around the 1040ST and the Casio CZ101 setup. I know that the neighboring booths sure knew that we were there. It is quite surprising to me how many people stopped and asked us why we were showing a product made by a company that went out of business! I think that Atari needs to spend a few more bucks on advertising. We will continue to spread the word in our own little way.

See you at the meeting, June 21 7:00PM

MASTERTRONIC Reviewed
by Nathan Block

Recently a new company emerged in the software business in very late 1986/early 1987 and is a fairly hot company for Commodore and Atari. The company's name....MASTERTRONIC.

Be interested in this company, I got a hold of three of their games and two of their joysticks. Here is my review.

NINJA-

A certain Harry Montanye reviewed NINJA in April's issue and he did a fantastic job! NINJA is a super martial arts game with excellent graphics and super music! It sounds like I'm overdoing it, but I'm not! This one's a sure winner and I had to really FIGHT to get my hands on it! It sold out quick at TARGET! The object is to retrieve seven idols that a certain Princess DiDi lost even though you never see her during the game. You can knock out the bandits with flying fists or feet or tear their guts out with chinese stars and daggers! I am in a violent mood because I'm going to see Predator tomorrow but that is getting off the track! Anyway get this game! The idols change locations so it is an endless challenge!

ACTION BIKER-

This one I have but I'm not too crazy about it. The graphics are impressive but the colors are a terrible bore! The same three colors make up most of the game; red, orange, and yellow. YUK! The game play is okay but it's a pain trying to get up to where you left off! In other words, it's a longgggg way home! However it does have some interesting background music, but I don't really recommend this game!

SPEED KING-

This one was terrible!! The graphics looked like mode 5 and they probably were! The game play was a super disappointment because of the strange choice of controls! To shift gears you use the JOYSTICK and to HOLD down the accelerator you must HOLD down the stick button and that gets to be a real pain in the neck! The background noise makes you feel like your in front of a clogged air conditioner. It is an all-around loser! DO NOT buy this game unless you are willing to take chances! I think I saw somebody seeing it at the meeting- now I know why!

The MAGNUM joystick-

Nothing new. It features a three million operation warranty, but you can't use some of that! What I mean is it is almost impossible to move diagonally! I'll demonstrate one at the meeting to prove it! And it

does the dream thing when you move it, it CLICKS! Ahh, the wonderful sound of chunks of metal hitting each other while your dodging aliens, fighting dragons, flying a plane, or the like! The button pushes in at an angle and I have accused it of firing at random! The shape is okay, but I prefer my old CX40s before I would let this one stay! Anyway for \$14.99 it is a ripoff! I would stay away from it.

All in all I still question MASTERTRONIC. Most of their stuff has to do with Commodore and they don't really care about ATARI. If you buy one game from them, buy NINJA! But other than that, I really don't expect much more!

Where's the Software?
by Nathan Block

I am terribly loyal to ATARI and if an award winning game isn't being manufactured for ATARI, I write to the company and let 'em know about it. However, my voice has been unheard and I can understand. Who will listen to just one user? (GETTING THE PICTURE??)

I would like to have several people who feel the same way join forces and write 1 to 2 letters a month to certain companies. In other words, I AM GOING TO MAKE MAIL NOISE! The company that got me mad enough to turn to such tactics was EPYX. I was terribly angry to find out EPYX didn't make the rest of the OLYMPIC GAMES series for ATARI (Summer Games 2, Winter Games, etc.)

If you feel as I do, I would like to hear from you. Write to me or call me for more information and addresses.

Nathan Block
2656 Georgia Ave. South
St. Louis Park, MN
55426
(612) 922-8812

I hope you'll join in this effort to bring out more software for your computer.

Technicolor Dream
by Ken Modeen

A few weeks ago, while browsing through the 8 bit software at a local Atari dealer, I came across a program called Technicolor Dream. The package caught my eye at first, lots of high resolution graphics with every color and every shade in them. Having always used Atari Artist or Paint to do any doodling with, I was surprised to see so many colors on one screen with a joystick drawing program. I love to do graphics. The program was less than fifteen bucks, so I bought it. I have tried it a time or two, I like it, so let me tell you about it.

The program is released in the states by International Computer Disk Inc. I.C.D. There is a 1986 copywrite by Red Rat Software Limited. There is alot of reference to British Ultra Soft, so I believe the program is written in England. David Forward and Keith Watterson lay claim to writing the program.

Technicolor Dream is a machine language program that allows you to draw on the screen using a joystick in port one, or the touchtablet in port two, or both. It has an initial range of 256 colors which all can be used on one screen. With the colors, you also have a choice of 128 filters. There is also a mix mode which allows any two colors, or a color and a filter to be combined to create more color and shade choices. Again, as far as I can tell there are no limitations to the number of different colors used on one screen.

The ease of use is remarkable. There is a palette that you can call up to choose colors. But as you might imagine, shifting back and forth from picture to palette is time consuming. There are number and letter codes for choosing colors and filters from the keyboard, but they are a bit confusing and hard to remember. A nice remedy to these difficulties was devised simply by being able to choose any color you have used before on the screen by going to that color with the cursor, and locking it back in with the start button. The program has a very easy to use main menu, and an equally simple storage menu.

The program comes with a graphics handler program which will help to install any of your masterpieces into a program that you may be writting. A handy deal indeed for a game program writer (basic by the way!). There is also a program that will load a digitized picture, convert it to graffics 8 and resave it. Also included is a basic screen dump for EPSON FX/MX/RX 80 printers.

I haven't been around the computer sceen for more than a couple of years. My knowledge of what is available for computers is somewhat limited, but all my free time time is used up trying to search out and use new information. My art knowledge however, is fairly extensive. I've been drawing and drafting for as long

as I can remember, And Technicolor Dream is the finest vehicle for creating computer art that I've been introduced to yet. It's worth many times the price I paid for it.

>>>Ken<<<

PROGRAMING CONTEST
Greg Gibbons

The idea of a one line basic program contest sparked favorable response at the May meeting, so let's go! Again, Atari basic only, and the topic is up to you. Entry's are due at the June meeting. Bring a disk with your program and I will copy it and return your disk to you on the spot. Be sure to add a REM line with your name and a name for the program.

I will also bring a cassette drive for any members who do not have a disk drive. If you have no recorder or drive then print your program on a sheet of paper and if time permits you can enter it at the meeting.

If you run up against the 114 character barrier it is OK to stuff the line by using abbreviated commands when entering. Another trick is to type POKE 82,0 then RETURN. This sets the left margin to 0 instead of the default 2, that will give you six more characters before the basic editor cuts you off. Remember that once your program exceeds 114 characters you will not be able to edit it past that point.

If we have time we will judge the entry's at this meeting. All entry's will be turned in to be published on the TAIG Disk Of the Month.

"Be seeing you!"

XL 512 byte upgrade
by Bob Wolley

This modification should be attempted only by those who have had some experience working with electronic boards and integrated circuits. If you are not confident of your abilities, ask for assistance from your User Group or a good TV/VCR technician.

The object of this change is to enable the RAM at location \$D600 thru \$D7FF that cannot normally be accessed. The RAM chips are "on" the buss during each machine cycle unless the -CI line from pin 16 of U3 [MMU] is low. This added circuit forces this line "on" during access to \$D600 thru \$D7FF addresses, which is all that's required to use the existing memory at that location.

Dis-assemble your 800XL by removing the six Phillips-head screws from the bottom of the case. Carefully lift the right side upwards (with it still lying on its keyboard) as if you were opening a book. Disconnect the keyboard cable and set the top section aside. Remove all the screws from the main board and work it loose from the base. Take note of the location and sequence of the shielding while you are pulling it apart. Now to the fun part....

Find the trace that connects pin 16 of U3 to pin 10 of U18. At a suitable location, completely cut thru this line. Then, use a small piece of double-sided foam tape to secure a 74HC20 IC to a clear area of the main board near U2 [74LS138]. Mount the chip on its back so that the pins point upward. (make sure you know which is pin #1!!) Using 30 gauge wire-wrapping wire, connect pin 7 to the nearest ground (pin 8 of U2 will do) and pin 14 to a nearby +5v point. (pin 16 of U2...) Wire pins 1,2,4, and 5 of the HC20 to pin 16 of U3 [MMU]. Solder a wire from pin 6 (of HC20) to pins 9 and 10 (of HC20). Add a wire from pin 12 (of HC20) to pin 9 of U2 [LS138] and from pin 13 (HC20) to pin 7 of U2 [LS138]. Last wire goes from pin 8 (HC20) to pin 10 of U18 [LS08]..... ALL DONE!!

Try the board now, before you put it back together. Just plug in the power and monitor plugs and boot Basic. If it shows "READY", it is OK. <If it does not work, check your changes very carefully. If all else fails, you can remove your additions and solder a wire from U3, pin 16 to U18, pin 10 - that will return the board to normal.> Now, you can put everything back together and try the memory at \$D600-D7FF. You will have 512 bytes all for your own use!!!

Bob Woolley
[75126,3446]

FOR 1200XL OWNERS: Cut the trace between pin 16 of U14

and pin 1 of U11. Mount the HC20 near U16. Pin 16 of U14 goes to pins 1,2,4 and 5. Pins 12 and 13 of the HC20 go to pins 9 and 7 of U18. Pin 8 of HC20 goes to pin 1 of U11. All that really changes are the IC numbers and one of the pins (pin 10 of U18 becomes pin 1 of U11).

THIS MATERIAL MAY BE FREELY COPIED, SOLD OR OTHERWISE DISTRIBUTED. REW

TAC-2 JOYSTICK Review
by Nathan Block

When I returned both my MAGNUMs (see MASTERTRONIC article) I was out two sticks and I hunted around for something new. I found an out-of-the-way joystick called the TAC-2. It is by a company named Suncom. It is a really nice stick! I don't know how new it is because no date was on the package but apparently they're a popular company because several languages appear on the package!

It is a handsome thing with three nice colors; red, silver, and, of course, black. It has four feet of cord and it has an appearance of the old CX40s by ATARI except with a black knob on top. It also has two buttons on either upper corners for right or left handed players! This feature is not found on a lot of other sticks today. The knob is also a nice feature. This is REALLY nice for some games where your hand might slip and I enjoy the feel. It has a thick shaft and an elongated base and is a sturdy stick! The shaft almost floats and it is hair action in my opinion.

If you need a new stick, don't overlook this guy. It is a reasonable stick at only \$10.00. I'm sure you will enjoy it!

512 bytes for your 130XE

By Steven Ingalsbe

On June 9, 1987 at approximately 5:00 pm, a loud cry was heard in the Eagan area. My family and most of the neighbors have become accustomed to this hideous sound, and they rarely call the police any more. What was that sound, you ask? It was my 130XE screaming as I approached it with a screwdriver and a soldering iron! It knew that I was about to tear it apart again, and try to make it do things that its creator had not intended for it to do. It forgave me when I opened it to put in 256K more RAM, and it even forgave me when I went in and poked around just to see how it worked. But it will probably never forgive me for this. I was going to tear it apart just to add 512 bytes of memory. Why? Because it's there. I had read Bob Woolley's article about adding 512 bytes to the 800XL and 1200XL, and I wanted it for my 320XE! So I ripped open the cover and pulled the keyboard and shield off. The tabs and my RF shield won't hold up too many more twists. Using Bob's article, a 1200XL schematic, and a 800XL schematic, I went to work on the 130XE. Finding the MMU was a piece of cake. There aren't too many 20 pin chips in the Atari (I to be exact). Pin 16 from this chip feeds into a 74LS08 chip on the 800XL and 1200XL. Hey! I have one of those too! I thought to myself that this was turning out too easy, but maybe it was going to be super easy. I measured from pin 16 of the MMU to pin 10 of the 74LS08 and it wasn't connected. So I figured that they must have used one of the other sections of the chip. The easiest way was to try all 8 input pins. Nothing. Ok, so it wasn't going to be that easy. When all else fails, trace the run. I traced it out and it went to pin 4 of a 40 pin chip with the number C061991-29. Major deviation from flight plan! Could this be the famous Freddie chip? I called Wizard's Work, and asked Phil if he could look the chip up for me. Sure enough, FREDDIE. After trying to explain to him why anybody would want to try and get 512 more bytes out of a 320XE, he decided I was a looney, and let me go back to what I was doing. Looking around the PC board, I saw that there was only 1 74LS138 chip. The Address Decoder! Pins 7, and 9 were unused just like the 800XL. I decided that I was going to go for the gusto. I used a 7420 chip because I had one laying around the house, and I figured 1 TTL chip won't draw too much power. If you are going to buy a chip, get the CMOS version Bob calls for, its worth the extra pennies. I cut off pins 3 and 11, and bent up all the rest except 7 (Ground) and 14 (Power). There is an empty space for a 14 pin chip (U21), so I soldered pins 7 and 14 into this spot. There wasn't much around that spot, so it was easy to work there. I tied pins 1,2,4, and 5 of the 7420 together, then I had to find a spot to connect it to the MMU. Pin 16 runs under the board and comes up through a feed-thru right below C24. I cut the run right next to the pad, and soldered the wire from pin 5 of the 7420 to the pad. Pin 6 of the 7420 goes to pins 9 and 10 of the 7420. Pin 8 of the 7420 (the output)

goes to the other side of the run you cut, which connects it to pin 4 of Freddie. Now connect the 7420 pin 12 to the 74LS138 pin 9 and pin 7 goes back to the 7420 pin 13. Thats all there is. It is exactly the same as the 800XL and 1200XL version, but you have to pick-off the signal before Freddie gets ahold of it. Now, I know that everybody is sitting there wondering why I would do this. First, the upgrade was FREE. I had all of the parts laying around, and second, it is 512 bytes that are guaranteed to be safe. No software house write anything for this area because nobody in their right mind would do that work for 512 bytes. I even have a program that fits perfectly into this space, and I will try to have it ready for this months DOM. It has a nasty little bug that keeps popping up, spitting at me, and then hiding. One of these days, I will catch the little devil, and he will pay! I want to thank Bob Woolley, for putting things like this out. I have several of his articles, and plan to modify my 1200XL in the future. (Maybe even do his 1200XL/1050 upgrade, but that one looks a little wild even for me!). If you find an unusual use for this or any hardware project, upload it to the TA16 BBS. 612-522-2687 300/1200 24 hours 10MEG on-line. We can be reached on PC Pursuit. Happy Hacking.

SysOp Notes for June 1987

By Tom Green

Not much new to say this month. The BBS is running fairly well, we hope to have the new equipment running sometime this month. Once the new hardware and software has been tested I will write an article explaining the new features.

The Signalman is up to it's old tricks of not always answering the phone. We will be purchasing an Avatex 1200Hc sometime this month, and hopefully we will be able to sell the Signalman.

We are getting more and more PC Pursuit callers, so please watch for new names on the BBS and lets give the new users and nice welcome. We also have 9 new members so watch for them also. For the benefit of the other user groups who receive our newsletter I will include the BBS phone number here. It is 612-522-2687.

The big discussion concerning music lyrics/religion has been nipped in the bud, simply because we have a new message base named Current Events. If you have any thoughts on the issues that make the news, please feel free to leave comments in message base #7.

The number of downloads available is ever increasing. Cory is uploading stuff to the BBS as I type, keep your eye out for new files.

That is about all, see you all on the BBS.

BYTES, NOT BUCKS.

Modems:

AVATEX 1200	300/1200 Baud	100.00
AVATEX 1200HC	300/1200, Hayes Compatible	150.00
DATA 24	300/1200/2400 Baud, Hayes compatible	250.00

Printers:

Star NP — 10	NLQ, tractor feed, Epson compatible	200.00
Epson LX — 86	NLQ, tractor feed, 120 CPS	265.00
Epson FX — 86e	NLQ, tractor feed, 220 CPS	400.00
Epson EX — 800	NLQ, tractor feed, 320 CPS	480.00

User Friendly Computers

8461 Plaza Blvd. NE
Spring Lake Park, MN 55432

786 — 8181

The ATARI Capital of Minnesota

by Mike Simpson and Mike Lechkun

Again in Chicago, the electronic industry displayed their wares at the Consumer Electronic Show. CES is a four day exposition held in the Windy City, showing everything from blenders and microwaves to telephones and stereos. And Atari Comes.

Eight bit owners again have nothing much to write home about. Although most of our efforts at the show were recruiting vendors for the Atari Magic show, we did get to talk to other users, Atari staffers, and those who claimed to be Atari staffers.

People representing Atari at their booth were again members of the Chicago user groups, third party software reps, and occasionally someone from Atari themselves. It was hard to tell who you were talking to because all wore name badges stating they were from Atari. Some pretty wild responses were heard by these reporters from some of the people (although not as wild as some of the comments from Neil Harris...more on that later).

So what's new, eight bitters? Not much. Everything touted as new was really just re-issued or ported over titles from different systems. On the hardware front, the XEP-80, Atari's 80 column device was shown for the third straight CES. This device is supposedly in production, supposedly to be in stores soon. Lets see now, wasn't it last year now that we were promised this peripheral? According to one staffer "we can't help it if there are parts shortages or other unforeseen difficulties..." OK. We'll call that excuse #1. 'We're awaiting FCC approval' will be excuse #2; 'there was a strike/fire/flood at the plant' is excuse #3; 'Hurricane Consuelo' excuse #4...

If you've noticed our negative slant so far, we must apologise. But after talking to other Atari users coming from the booth we couldn't help but notice that a lot of our feelings were shared with other fellow Atarians. There were some good things to come out of the booth. Atari was "flying high" with Flight Simulator, running on an ST, projected on a screen in front of a cockpit of a Cessna. It would have been nice to fly this from the planes controls, but alas, you had to use the mouse on a pad resting on your lap. On top of the bi-leveled booth rested a Comanche aircraft, wing span and all. You had to get a boarding pass from one of the lovely Atari flight attendants (another nice thing about the booth). But that's not what you were going up there for. You were there to see...

...the brand new Atari XE Game System (XEGS). A sleekly styled grey unit with round pastel buttons for reset, option, select, and start. The once

optional-now standard keyboard is physically separate from the game unit. This is the lap top keyboard many of us have been waiting for! The help key is on the keyboard, separated from the other function keys. The XEGS is essentially a redesigned 65 XE computer. The XEGS will run all standard peripherals, but has no parallel bus. As Mike L. went up to see the unit, there was a hub-bub of activity below. Was this because a member of MAGIC was here to see it? Nope, just VP Michael Katz escorting the Toys R Us delegation up for a first class demonstration and some major league arm twisting...we saw a good show and the TRU people left the "hangar" smiling.

With the XEGS comes Flight Simulator, Bug Attack (packaged with light pistol), and Midnight Magic pinball, each in cartridge form. Flight Simulator is on Atari's new 128K super bank select cartridge. A 256K cart is also in the works. These carts and accessories will be available to computer owners about 6 months after the release of the XEGS. Atari has acquired the rights to many software titles which will also be released on cartridge format (Choplifter, Archon, Ball Blazer to name a few). The XEGS will be backed by an aggressive TV and radio ad campaign starting in September. We'll see.

Also on display in the new Atari tradition of 'power without the product' was the SX 1200 modem. The unit on display had a power cord coming out of it, and that was all (rumor has it you'll need all the software - separately sold - for this non-850 standard unit). Also on display was the new XF 551 single/dual/true double density double sided disk drive. This 5 1/4" floppy drive boasts a data transfer rate roughly 2.9 times faster than the 1050 drive it is to replace. It will be supported by Bill Wilkinson's new ADOS, being written as you read this report. ADOS will support time/date stamping and tree directories. When asked if SpartaDos will work with the drives, one Atari staffer defensively replied "we can't help it if developers don't follow our guidelines when writing software..." Hmmm. ICD's president Tom Harker assured us there will be no problems here.

Also on display was the new XC 1411 composite monitor for the 8 bitters. The unit was styled to match the XE color schemes, and resembles an ST monitor. But this unit will not be produced unless there is demand for it (rumor is that R & D is fighting Marketing within Atari over this decision). Unless a good letter writing campaign is organized soon, this puppy is history. Then again stranger things could happen...Jim and Tammy could come back, the Tigers could be in the '87 World Series, the 8 bit emulator could come out...did someone say emulator?

During the show the emulator question came up again. As we left the booth after the second night of the show, we noticed a crowd gathering around MichTron's cubicle in Atari's booth. Was a new game being shown?

A new database? Nope, just Leonard Tramiel and Neil Harris hanging around with the Commodore C-64 emulator. Their comments (VERBATIM) go as follows:

NH: "...is that the same dork that wrote the one for the 800?"

LT: "No, a different one...this one's from England."

NH: "...he's ripping us off..."

LT: "if he tries to release this, he's in for big trouble..."

Sounds like fond Commodore sentiments still exist in their hearts, eh? Also heard at the Chicago user group meeting/reception were these comments on the Atari 800 emulator:

NH: <laughter> "...Darek [author of this emulator] has been a real pain in the <pause, followed by more laughter>. We tried to talk to that little twirp, but..."

Given the opportunity to open the ST to another two whole worlds of existing software, this is the attitude that Atari chooses to take. Surprisingly, Atari has given its reluctant blessing to release of the 800 emulator with OS and Rev. C basic modules intact, providing the source code is also released. A bidding war was rumored to have been won by ANALOG (hooray!) but ANALOG denies any "war".

Briefly for the ST, new software was shown by MichTron, TimeWorks, and others. The Mega ST's were deemed inappropriate to show to the CES audience, and thus held from display. The Atari PC clones were shown running graphics demos from an Atari PC hard disk drive. Lotus 1 2 3, Flight Simulator, or any of the other PC compatibility "tests" were nowhere near this display!

In conclusion, it would be great to see all the new things shown by Atari come out as scheduled. From a company whose name is more and more becoming associated with the terms "vaporware" and "wishware", Atarians will all benefit from prompt and actual releases. Atari stock will zoom (more than it has already - Atari announced a stock split the show for holders of record on 6/2/87), and faith in our favorite computer company would be more than restored.

Make it happen, Atari.

*** Amateur Fair ***

Report

By Tom Green

The Amateur Fair was very successful, we got 9 new members signed up, which not only paid for the booth, but also gave us a little profit. We handed out several dozen posters, hundreds of leaflets, and other assorted paperwork. We talked to a lot of people who, hopefully, when buying a computer will remember Atari. New members got T-shirts and posters and a reduced membership fee of \$10.00.

The new members are from Columbia Heights, North Minneapolis, Northeast Minneapolis, Bloomington, Chester Iowa, Isle Minnesota, Cambridge Minnesota, Stillwater Minnesota, and Deer River Minnesota. A lot of people from out of town have joined, this is another good reason for writing a newsletter article, this is the only contact some of the members have with the group.

The Amateur Fair seems to be getting more and more computer related and less Amateur Radio.

There was a very good turn out on Saturday, but not too many on Sunday. I have heard some talk about the Amateur Fair being only one day long next year.

Thanks to everyone who helped us out this year.

Reprinted from the I/O Connector
BTL Hard Disk Review
by Bill Knapp

The BTL hard disk is a very nice system, offering a good alternative to the MID, Atr-8000, and Supra's ill-fated hard drive. The system includes a hard disk case, large enough for two half height disks, the BTL interface, your choice of hard disk sizes, and the hard disk controller. The system I bought included a 40 megabyte hard disk at a total of \$1000. The speed is beautiful; it takes just seconds to write DOS files.

The interface types available are the BTL 2001 for the 800XL, and the BTL 2002 for the 130XE, both of which plug into the parallel bus interface on each computer. Included in the interface of each is a firmware for logical drive partitioning. All interface related variables are stored in the RAM on the interface to prevent conflict with other software's memory usage.

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Reprinted Courtesy of Magic, Warren Michigan.

Tom and Gerry Visit ICD
by Jerry Cross and Mike Lechkun

Oh well, Mike's lousy mouse joke at least got us in the door and to the receptionist. We entered an old textile factory on a bumpy road on the south side of Rockford, Illinois. The building's reduced demands allowed it to house small, emerging businesses. This is where ICD resides.

After the aforementioned bout with the receptionist, we were greeted by Marilyn, one of the executive secretaries, and were shown the main office. This office house other secretaries, accounting and art departments, and programmers. Sitting on a dresser in the middle of the room was a 520 ST, Courier 2400 modem, disk and hard drives--in short, the ICD BBS. That's where the fun started! We were introduced to staff programmer Keith Ledbetter. Keith, of Express! fame, showed us his first products for his new employer. ICD Express! (we think that was the title) is an ST BBS program that will knock your socks off and send them across the room! It's really that good! The program is a mixture of features found on 850 BBS Express! and some of the major on-line services. Written in a language composed by Keith (also to be released as soon as it is documented), ICD Express is a callers dream, yet not a Sysop's nightmare. In the download section, a user can scan the list of available files, or view each filename followed by a brief description. Arc'd files can be un-arc'd on-line to view the separate files contained in the master file. The sysop may set a variety of flags restricting/allowing different privileges to individual users. Standard X-modem, CRC X-modem, and Y-modem are the protocols supported. "Kermit's batching allows some users to type in ".*" and download everything, and I'm not too keen on that," said Keith. 32 message bases can be created, with a maximum of 250 messages each containing 4000 bytes of information. This will cost you over a meg of memory, but that's the breaks--get a Mega ST when they come out! Thread following, tagged messages, and a new on-line text editor makes this message area complete. I thought the suggested retail of \$79.95 was reasonable, Jerry thought it a bit pricey. For ICD's first foray into the ST field, this seems an excellent product in the tradition that ICD has established.

After Mike got up off his knees in worship to Mr. Ledbetter, the tour moved on. Up an escalator and through a vacant machinery room we went. Marilyn left us in the capable hands of Brad, head of shipping/handling and production. Stacks of untested, incompleated MIO devices were about the room. Each MIO is tested from 9 to 24 hours for reliability before packaging and shipping. This commitment to quality along with ICD's excellent consumer support has forced them to expand three times within the warehouse.

Surely a fourth expansion is eminent. When Jerry complained of a lack of quality service on non-ICD equipment in his area, Brad rather matter-of-factly said "send it in to us - Tom (Harker, ICD's President) will look at it." ICD routinely assists with all installation of their products at reasonable fees. ICD installs Rambo's (memory upgrades), and US Doublers (1050 drive enhancements) for \$30 and \$15...they'll look at user's equipment as well when their own product checks OK.

After being frisked for any free sample MIO's (just kidding), our tour had ended. In spite of the grubby factory style surroundings, ICD is a company committed to dependability to all Atari owners. This is one book you can't judge by the cover!

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The data transfer rate to/from the hard disk and controller is 5 megabytes per second. The transfer of data to/from the controller and te computer is slightly less than 500K bytes per second. The ability of DOS to handle data limits transfers to between 15K and 100K per second. Most standard floppies for the Atari computer have an effective transfer rate of somewhere between 4000 and 9600 bits per second (or .6K to 1.2K bytes per second). Therefore the HDA should provide a substantial speed improvement over your current system with floppies.

To be honest, we had some problems with our drives. The first one BTL sent didn't work. They got it cleared up within a few weeks, and sent us a new one. That worked great, until the power supply fried. But they got that fixed fast, and I was back on line within two weeks. I have been running relatively problem-free for some time.

I hope this article was informative and interesting to you, and will aid you in your choice of hard disks for the Atari 8-bit.

Bill Knapp
Sysop of The Sherwood Forest

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Twin Cities Atari Interest Group
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Last
Newsletter
A Renewal Time*

Next Taig Meeting
Sunday, June 21
Taig 7:00 pm

Please note the meeting is one week
early.